

# THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB NEWSLETTER – EXTRA!

July 2024: Editor Dave Gray



## Introduction

Welcome to the July Newsletter!

And to summer... This is another Extra! Edition with articles from Doug and from Richard Smith on recent meets. Big thanks to them, also to Barbs, Gail, Mike Doyle, and David LJ for help with this edition. Please let me have material for the next Edition! The final deadline for that is 26<sup>th</sup> July.

## Looking ahead

Here are the upcoming meets venues for July and August, details are on the Club Website. The meets list is constantly being updated, please **check it out regularly** on the Website. Meets added to the programme since the last edition are in bold as a reminder **in case you've missed them...**

2 July	Climbing: Llandulas Cave
11 July	Evening Walk – Chester Walls from Countess Park
12/14 July	Hut Weekend
16 July	Climbing: Castle Inn
19-21 July	Yorkshire Dales – Chapel le Dale
26/28 July	Hut Weekend
30 July	Climbing: Helsby
<b>3 August</b>	<b>The Cloud and Mow Cop</b>
6 August	Climbing: Marian Bach
9/11 August	Hut Weekend
12/16 August	Mid week Climbing (based at the Hut)
17 August	Llantysilio Hills
20 August	Climbing Penmaen Head
23/25 August	The Roaches Weekend
30/31/1 August	Hut Weekend

## Venues in Focus

Here's a sideways look at a couple of July's upcoming meets...

Barbara's **Yorkshire Dales Meet** at Chapel le Dale naturally raises the possibilities of a go at the 3 Peaks of Yorkshire. I last did this fantastic walk a few years back with my friend, colleague, and client Sharon Callaghan. She hit on one of its less celebrated attractions saying 'any day when I can eat 6 Mars Bars without feeling guilty has my vote!'

If the full 3 – or indeed 6! - is not your choice, a good walk straight from the Hill Inn is to go up Philpin Lane opposite and cross the valley towards Bruntscar to ascend Whernside by its steep SE flank. I went up that way in 2023 and the path up the flank is much improved and less eroded than it was. Then go over the top, along the ridge and down and round by the 3



Peaks route to Ribbleshead. There are great views back to Ingleborough to enjoy.

The descent route passes a fine waterfall and the signal box at Blea Moor.

From Ribbleshead there are good valley paths going under the viaduct and back to base.



For me the isolated signal box embodies the wild setting and history of the Settle Carlisle railway line.

Worth a read is LTC Rolt's classic book '*Red for Danger*'.

Rolt was a pioneer of the conservation of industrial heritage, and while I don't agree 100%

with his rosy eyed views of 19<sup>th</sup> century railways his writing is superbly atmospheric and features accidents on the Settle Carlisle line.



A little further afield another idea is to go back to the A65 and head NW towards Kirby Lonsdale and go up the single track road towards Leck Fell

House, where there is a small parking area. From here you can ascent Gragareth, the highest top in the modern county of Lancashire. Go up the track east of the house, and quickly strike up and across up the fell heading for the 3 Men of Gragareth (a set of tall stone cairns - see below), and then the summit.



You can then go N along the ridge to take in Green Hill, and then Great Coum and Crag Hill above Dentdale. I did the route in November 2022: keep to the west side of the summit wall then cross to the east side at the large 'County Stone'. For my return I retraced my steps to the col south of Green Hill and then walked down on a compass bearing SW to pick up the track back to the house and the car.

This is a relatively quiet route with a very remote feel to it, and is about 9 miles long.

The LTC Rolt book also describes the day when Chester railway bridge collapsed, and we've got a good chance to visit **Chester** on the **evening walk** on 11 July organised by Bill.

I've done a fair bit of low level walking from Chester, sometimes taking advantage of my 'finely matured persons' Merseytravel pass to use the train for free. If Bill's walk whets your appetite for the city and its surroundings, one circular day walk I like can be done by train, going from the station straight ahead down City Road. And then slanting through the attractive Grosvenor Park to the river Dee at the Queens Park suspension bridge.

Cross over here and go upstream on the southern river bank around Earl's Eye as far as Eccleston Ferry. This is a pleasant stroll across meadows, and when I did it in June 2023 I finally saw a kingfisher on the Dee. At the (disused) Ferry (where there is a bit of parking

should you want to do this circuit by car) take the lane up into Eccleston village and go left just past the church and then almost immediately sharp right on a lane going north.



This is an old Roman road. Where it crosses the new A55, there is an unmarked track going off left on the far side of the bridge right above the main road, and you follow this WSW into woodland. It then turns sharp right and heads N.

You're now on an old driveway to the Duke of Westminster's modest 2 up 2 down at Eccleston Hall. It was known as the 'Chester Approach' and you can see from the map that the idea was to give visitors the impression that the Duke lived in a vast area

of woodland, while in fact the various Hall 'approaches' just go through strips of trees. Cut off from the Hall by the A55, it is now a courtesy path and cycle trackway and is known as 'The Dukes Drive'. It's a lovely woodland and is managed by The Woodland Trust.

The Drive becomes a public footpath and emerges on the fringe of Chester city centre by the busy A483. Cross this at the pedestrian lights and go down the public footpath heading N through woodland on the opposite side of the road, which starts down a set of steps.

This woodland is called the Dingle and again is managed by the Woodland Trust. It goes north down to the river where you get a great worm's eye view of the mighty Grosvenor bridge, built in 1832, that was for 30 years the largest single span stone-built bridge in the world.



Then follow the path on the S bank of the river, taking in a fine prospect of the old Dee bridge and visiting the tiny Roman Temple of Minerva dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The temple is the only one of its type in Europe that is still in its original location. The path takes you back to Queens Park Bridge to rejoin the outward route. I reckon the total distance is about 6.75 miles by car and 8.75 by train.

## Grand Days Out (and In) – Recent Meets Highlights

The **Aviemore** meet went very well, lots got done over the week including Munros Meall Cuaich, Bynack Mor, and Cairngorm, and the Monadhliath 3 (Carn Dearg, A'Chailleach, Carn Sgulain). Plus at Corbett level Meall a Buchaille, and a low level walk from Loch Garten to Aviemore on the Speyside way. Reg also took the opportunity to try out quad biking...see Richard's Extra! article for more scary stuff – scrambling!

See also Doug's article on the **Criggion 3 Peaks**, we had a super day in an area totally new to me at least!



In breaking news, as we go to screen the **Welsh 3000's** meet saw Simmo finish in a fantastic time of 10 hours 11 minutes.



On the rocks 9 members/prospective members had a very successful session at **Dyserth Castle Slab**.

Between them, they climbed all the routes on the Crag. These are graded F4 – F6B in the sports limestone pantheon.

The session finished up with drinks in the Crown Inn in Trelawnyd.

I was working on **The Breck** earlier this month and had the pleasure of meeting and talking with these two gents, both leading mountaineers. On the left is Tim Carruthers, and on the right Leigh McGinley. They had many Grand Days Out with the GMC in the early days, joining in 1974 and 1975 respectively. They climbed on the Breck with Alan Rouse who went to school with them.

John Huxley's book gives details of some of their mountaineering achievements. These included in Leigh's case the first British single day ascent of the Nose of El Capitan in Yosemite. Tim has translated many mountaineering books and articles from the German.

Hux's book also omitted some of their escapades – they said they don't light fires on the sitting room floors of club huts any more! In that vein they told me of a book '*Bad Climber*' by 'Strappo', published this year. Strappo is in fact the pen name of 'the other Roger Hughes' who was in the GMC in the early days, and the Club features in the book. I've got it from Amazon and it's a nerve-tingling read!



I gave them some news about the Club and they asked me to pass on their best wishes to old friends. They wished the Club good fortune, and were pleased to hear about what we were doing to add variety to the meetings at Gallaghers.

## **New Occasional Section – Members’ ‘Personal Column’**

An innovation! This is a new section where members can celebrate recent events such the arrival of babies, marriages, civil partnerships, and graduations etc, and where we also can take time to remember the lives and the contribution of Club members who have died.



If you have copy, please let me have details!

I'll start the ball rolling with these two babies – twins Harry George and Bonny Peggy, born at the end of May.

They are the children of my young cousins down in Hampshire, and it was great that they have called the boy George, it was my Dad's name. This year their Gran, my cousin, has gone from having 2 grandchildren to having 5!

**EXTRA!**

## **SCRAMBLING THE FIACAILL RIDGE ON CAIRNGORM – by Richard Smith**

Seven of us at the Aviemore meet had a great day out scrambling up the Fiacaille Ridge on Cairngorm. This scramble features in Bill Birkett's book of Great British Ridge Walks and fully lived up to expectations. Its full name is the Fiacaille Ridge of Coire an t-Sneachda, meaning "the toothed ridge of the snow corrie". A few lingering patches of snow down in the corrie were an indication of the harsh conditions which can occur here in winter.



We set off from the Coire Cas car park and followed a good path, eventually arriving at a fork, where we took a fainter path heading towards the foot of the ridge. This path petered out into a boulder field which necessitated an hour of uphill slog, balancing from one boulder to the next.

At a height of about 1100m, the ridge levelled off to a flat slabby section and we could then see the scrambling ahead of us.

*Photo: Looking ahead to the main scrambling*

Three rocky towers were climbed up, over and down on fine solid granite, leading to a narrow exciting section at the base of a final tower. This was climbed up an open chimney with a few exposed moves. Fortunately, there were enough clefts in the rock to gain a good handhold and the friction on the granite was excellent.

On the left, a steep drop gave superb views down into the Coire, before finally we popped out on to the summit plateau.

There is an easier route to the right which bypasses the final tower if preferred...





*Photo: Downclimbing the first tower*



*Photo: Top of the final tower with views to Loch Morlich*



*Photo: Celebrating on the Top of the final tower*

The route is classed as a grade 1 scramble but the consensus seems to be that it is at the upper end of grade 1 / bottom end of grade 2.



After having first lunch on the summit of Cairn Lochan, we walked round the headwall of Coire an t-Sneachda and up on to the summit of Cairn Gorm itself. Here there is a weather station, which recorded the highest ever wind speed in the UK at 173mph. We ate our second lunch, grateful for the fact that we had a warm sunny day with just a slight breeze!



*Photo: Looking back to the Fiacaill Ridge from the head of Coire an t-Sneachda*



*Photo: Second lunch on Cairn Gorm 1245m*

Finally, an easy descent down the tourist path, passing all the ski paraphernalia back to the car park. Well done to Sue, Simmo, Nicky, Helen, Kev, and Steve for completing the route!

## **CRIGGION THREE PEAKS – by Doug Florence**

Eight Gwydyr members appeared in the car park underneath Rodney's Pillar, Criggion, Powys a bit North of Welshpool for a walk led by Doug and recce'd by Doug and Gail back in February.

The drive down from the Wirral had been through torrential rain and there were mutterings about overtrousers and gloves, however, the rain stopped pretty much as we set off at 10:40. Steep and somewhat slippery ascent to our first "peak" Breidden Hill, capped by Rodney's Pillar, an obelisk erected 1782 by "The Gentlemen of Montgomeryshire" to honour the naval victories of Sir George Brydges Rodney, Admiral of the White, during the American War of Independence. The obelisk is now fenced off, bulging and in need of some serious repair but we risked standing around the base admiring the extensive views which by now had cleared of grey mist, with only heavy showers raining on other people now visible. Dave Gray pointed out various hills such as the Clwydians, Berwyns and Stiperstones and Long Mynd. It really is a remarkably good viewpoint.

We then headed through mostly forestry on a rather obscure path to our next "peak" Moel Y Gofa. Again a steep ascent through lovely beech woods. The short scramble was negotiated by all without incident and we reached the summit, where as a result of Dave's earlier pleadings we stopped for lunch. This is also topped by an obelisk, this time in memory of Uriah Burton, died 1986, renowned bare knuckle fighter and "King of the Gypsies". He is grandfather to Tyson Fury, carrying on the family tradition.





*Rodney's Pillar just visible on top of Breidden Hill from Middletown Hill. Blue skies!  
Lunch on Moel y Golfu summit*





*Uriah Burton's memorial, Moel y Golfa*



Then it was onward past more beech trees and bracken covered fields to the base of our final “peak” Middletown Hill. Another steep ascent to the hill fort ringed top, with yet more great views. Then a rather steep and slippery descent followed by a lovely field covered in buttercups and back onto forestry trails to get back to the cars.



*Middletown Hill from Moel y Golfa*





*Summitting Middletown Hill with Moel y Golfa behind*



*Poles out for a steep and slippery descent*



*Buttercup field*

Despite the forecast and the amount of time people spent putting overtrousers on and off, the weather was actually rather pleasant, indeed hot and sunny at times with only one serious shower (which didn't actually get your legs seriously wet anyway).

The day was rounded off in The Admiral Rodney pub just down the road to maintain the theme of the walk.

Altogether a very pleasant walk through varied countryside. Pleased we recce'd it because the navigation is not straightforward. About 8 miles, 13km with 2400ft, 730m ascent.